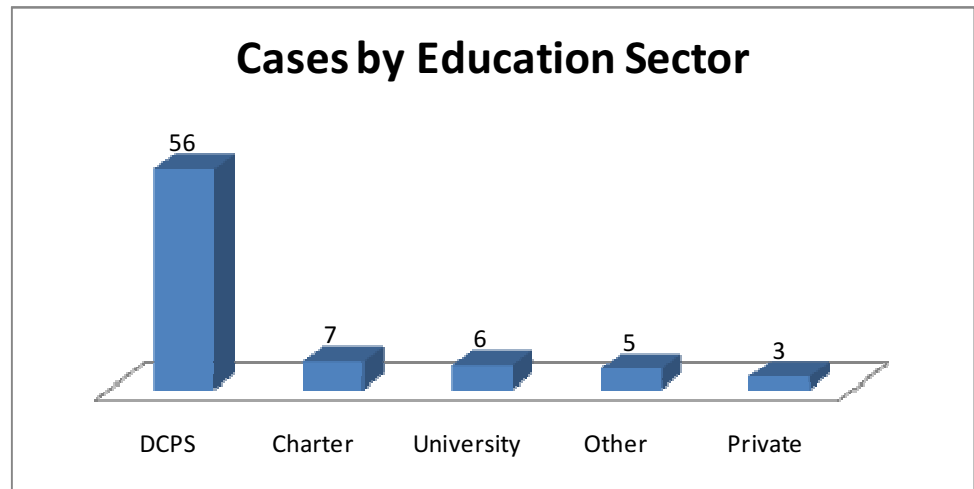


August 2008

Notes from the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is a neutral, independent resource for problem resolution in District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), Public Charter Schools (PCS) and the University of the District of Columbia. Each month the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education submits a summary of findings to the public. August 2008 marked the first school opening for the Ombudsman. While there were major changes in the school system, including the closing of 23 DCPS schools and the opening of 6 new charter schools, the Ombudsman received very few calls related to the transition. Using the newly adopted case coding system, the office intends to monitor closely issues related to school enrollment and registration, transportation and student grade and transcript disputes. These issues had previously been tracked under the “administrative” category. The new categories will give a more defined picture of the issue trends.

Monthly Data



Issue Highlight: Student Registration

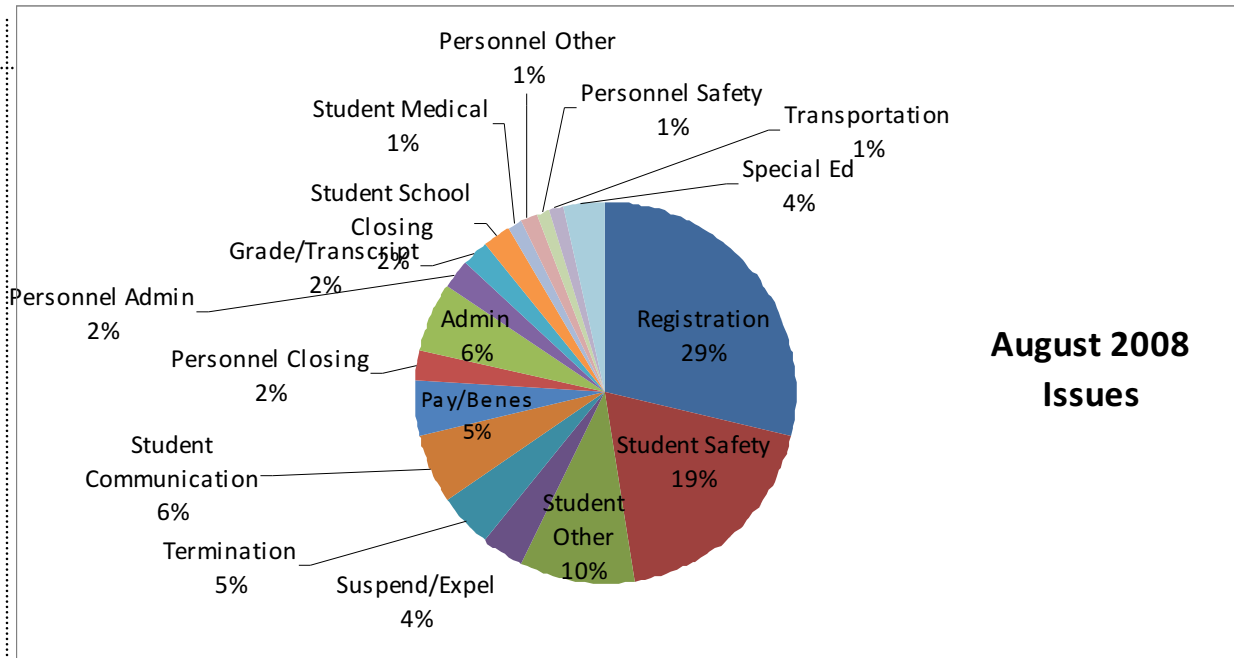
Student registration and enrollment represented a majority of all issues that the Ombudsman addressed in August, a total of 24 of the 77 new cases. The issue made up 34 percent of student-related issues. Requests for help on registration came from all three education sectors—UDC, charters and DCPS. The Ombudsman did not see any consistent trend in the types of enrollment issues. Problems ranged from securing a placement in an already full college English class to requesting a transfer from one high school to another because of safety concerns. Two individuals had problems related to over-age placement. District law requires students to attend school from age 4 up to age 18. Unless a student has a special education need, schools have the discretion of allowing a student 18 and older to attend. Over-aged students can complete high school by enrolling in the DCPS STAY programs or in an adult education program. The Ombudsman worked with DCPS to secure a traditional placement for a 19 year-old slated to graduate this year. The other student, 18 years old with 11th grade status, enrolled in one of the adult education charter school programs.

Number of Cases
77

Number of Issues
84

Most Frequent Student Issue:
*Registration/
Enrollment*

Most Frequent Personnel Issue:
*Termination and
Pay/Benefits*



Call volume increased in August over the prior summer-break months. As shown in the table on the previous page, 77 people contacted the Ombudsman about public education issues in August. A vast majority of the cases, 56, were about DCPS. Fewer than 10 cases each were from charter schools and University of the District of Columbia. Many of the cases labeled “other” involved individuals needing help taking advantage of the DC Tuition Assistance Grant and College Access Grant offered through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). The Ombudsman facilitated a link between the individuals and OSSE staff. The chart above shows the frequency of all of the issues brought to the Ombudsman from individuals. Student issues represented a majority of cases with registration at 29 percent and student safety making up 19 percent of all cases. When evaluating student-related issues only, as shown in the table below, registration, safety and the general issues category represented the largest percentage of the caseload.

